



Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
officielles



[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [News Releases](#) > [News Releases \(2000\)](#) > Ottawa, June 6, 2000

Ottawa, June 6, 2000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Federal services in both official languages in Ontario: Despite some progress, problems persist

The Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr. Dyane Adam, published a follow-up report today on federal offices designated to offer services in both official languages in Ontario, outside the National Capital Region. Such studies allow the Commissioner to fulfill her mandate by determining whether federal offices are complying with the *Official Languages Act* and providing the public with quality service in both official languages.

In Ontario, outside the National Capital Region, 752 federal offices out of 2 589 are designated to provide service in both official languages, or 29% of the total. The report evaluates 76 of these offices. The Ontario results show slight progress in the provision of bilingual service since our initial study in 1994, but the results, on the whole, are unsatisfactory.

The Commissioner expects federal institutions to take all necessary measures to ensure that French speaking clients in Ontario feel at ease communicating in French at all stages in the chain of service. This includes the availability of documentation in both official languages, a bilingual greeting by federal employees (who form the first link in the chain of service), and the availability of service itself in both official languages.

Signs and documentation

While our study shows that signs, forms and documentation are available in both official languages in nearly all the offices audited—an improvement over 1994—the Commissioner deplores the fact that 15 of the offices visited still did not display a pictogram to indicate the availability of service in both official languages.

Bilingual greeting on the telephone and in person

When a citizen telephones or comes in person to a federal office that is designated bilingual, the employees must greet him or her in both official languages to indicate that service is available in English or French. In 1994, members of the public had one chance in two of being greeted in both official languages when they telephoned a federal office designated bilingual in Ontario. Today, we note a slight improvement, but also some inconsistency in how employees answer calls. Our study shows that employees consistently use a bilingual greeting on the telephone in only 52% of cases, and occasionally in 16% of cases. The Commissioner is disappointed that citizens who go in person to a federal office designated bilingual in Ontario are greeted in both official languages in less than one office out of four (22%), compared with 12% in 1994.

"Our studies show that a bilingual greeting in person and on the telephone is lacking in all the provinces and territories and, unfortunately, Ontario is no exception. The absence of a bilingual greeting by

employees can only discourage French-speaking clients from exercising their language rights. Federal offices must immediately take measures to rectify this situation," Dr. Adam insisted.

Service on the telephone and in person

Our 1994 study showed that citizens succeeded in obtaining service in French on the telephone from designated federal offices in 70% of cases. The situation has deteriorated slightly, for our follow-up shows that service in French was available consistently on the telephone in only 68% of cases, and occasionally, in 18% of cases. In 14% of cases, service on the telephone was simply non-existent in French.

The availability of service in person in French has improved. The public has access to service in French in three quarters of the designated offices visited (76%), compared with 66% at the time of the 1994 study. "I am pleased to see this progress, but I fail to understand why nearly a quarter of the offices audited in Ontario are unable to provide service in French to members of the public who visit them." Dr. Adam believes that it should be possible for federal offices to attain a 100% level of effectiveness of service to the public in both official languages. "Federal institutions in Ontario must take strong measures to ensure that services in French are available at all times, in all designated offices. This is the only acceptable and satisfactory objective," the Commissioner emphasized.

This report on Ontario is the last of a series of follow-up reports on each province and territory. A summary report that will analyze the overall situation across the country will follow before the end of the year.

-30-

Information

Commissioner's Representative (Ontario Region)

Date modified: 2007-08-29